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THE DUTY OF PATRIOTISM VINDICATED AND ENFORCED: A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ELY.

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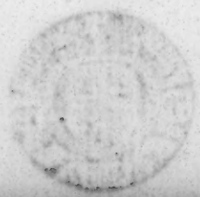

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SERMON.

JUDGES V. 23.

CURSE YE MEROZ, SAID THE ANGEL OF THE LORD; CURSE YE BITTERLY THE INHABITANTS THEREOF: BECAUSE THEY CAME NOT TO THE HELP OF THE LORD, TO THE HELP OF THE LORD, AGAINST THE MIGHTY.

NEVER were the praiſes of Patriotiſm celebrated in a more lofty ſtrain, than in the divine ſong, from whence I have taken the text.

AFTER piouſly attributing their ſucceſs to the immediate interpoſition of that God, who ruleth over all; the inſpired authors forcibly diſplay in a few words the miſeries they endured, as a conquered and oppreſſed people: "In the days of "Shamgar the ſon of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-

" ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through " by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceaſed, they " ceaſed in Iſrael." — They then point out the great diſadvantages a conquered people muſt always labour under, when they endeavour to reſcue themſelves from the thraldom they have ſubmitted to: " Then was war in the gates. Was " there a ſhield or ſpear ſeen among forty thouſand in Iſ- " rael?" — Theſe circumſtances naturally inſpire the ſoul with the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude towards thoſe heroes, who gallantly aſſerted their own honour and the liberty of their country: " My heart is towards the Governors of " Iſrael, that offered themſelves willingly among the people." — After paying due honour to all thoſe, who ſignalized themſelves on that great occaſion; they proceed to cenſure ſuch as did not join in the conteſt, but appeared in that important moment inſenſible to the welfare of their country, and regardleſs of the danger, their countrymen encountered in ſupport of the common cauſe. But againſt the inhabitants of Meroz, who, though their ſituation had rendered them, as it were, ſpectators of the perilous conflict, came not to the aid of the champions of their liberty againſt their powerful oppreſſors, the tremendous ſentence of divine vengeance is ſolemnly denounced: " Curſe ye Meroz, ſaid the Angel of " the Lord, curſe ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; becauſe " they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the " Lord, againſt the mighty."

WHETHER Patriotiſm can be ranked in the claſs of Chriſtian virtues, or whether it be not even contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, is a queſtion, that has ſome times been agitated.

tated. Chriſt, it has been ſaid, has no where injoined it in his precepts to his followers; nor has he promiſed to reward it in this world or the next. And the comprehenſive Spirit of Chriſtianity will not be confined within ſuch narrow bounds: it extends it's love to all mankind: it embraces every individual of the human race. The religion of the Father of all knows no diſtinctions of countries or climates: it is not circumſcribed by any partial imaginary boundary: univerſal benevolence is it's governing principle: and the relation we bear to God as our creator and preſerver, and to each other as children of the ſame Father, and the care of the ſame Providence, is the ground of that principle.

CHRIST, it is true, deſcended not to minute particulars. He did not form a ſyſtem of morality for his followers; nor deſcant upon the diſtinct and ſeparate branches of virtue and religion. He pointed out to us the leading principles of our duty, the love of God and of our Neighbour; and left it to common ſenſe and plain reaſon to apply them to particular caſes.

INDEED where Patriotiſm, or the Love of our country, acts in oppoſition to univerſal benevolence; where by it is meant nothing more than a combination of one body of men or one nation againſt the juſt rights, the peace, and liberty of others; in that caſe there can be no doubt, but it is unjuſt and wicked. The property, which ſuch men thus acquire, is acquired by robbery; and as many, as loſe their lives in oppoſing their deſigns, are murdered.

But the pernicious effects, ariſing from the abuſe of any affection, prove nothing againſt the lawfulneſs, or even the merit of it, when properly exerciſed. Univerſal benevolence is the broad baſis, on which all our duties to each other are built: it is the great circle, that comprehends within it every other principle of our conduct to men, from extenſive Patriotiſm to narrow Self-love. It is true, not only that love of country, love of kindred, and ſelf-love are meritorious, when exerciſed in proper ſubordination; but even that the neglect of them would be highly criminal. Nay; the narrower the duty is, the more care has the Author of the univerſe taken, that it be earneſtly attended to. The welfare of the whole muſt ariſe from the combined welfare of individuals. No one can judge or provide ſo uniformly, ſo conſtantly, and ſo effectually for the ſafety and welfare of an individual, as the individual himſelf. Therefore, by the wiſe regulation of the Author of nature, ſelf-love acts with an almoſt irreſiſtible influence, and in a manner compels us to obey it. The inſtinctive force of love of kindred, love of country, and univerſal benevolence, is feebler in proportion to their reſpective diſtances from ſelf-love.

From this view of the ſtructure of the human mind we may learn the following important leſſon: That the firſt and moſt immediate object of a man's care and attention ſhould be his own concerns. To this he is moſt powerfully excited by the natural form of his mind, and the God of nature who formed it. He has, however, ſtrong natural affections to induce him to pay conſiderable attention to his own kindred, whoſe affairs he can beſt judge of, and whoſe happineſs he can

can moſt influence. Here it is the office of reaſon, the controuler and director of all our paſſions, to ſupply the want of inſtinct. But it is neceſſary, that men be with-held from the wild deſign of employing themſelves about the happineſs of others, when they cannot influence it, to the neglect of their own, which is generally in their power. Self-love, therefore, will not recede, or reſign it's pretenſions, until reaſon has convinced it, that it cannot be indulged but at the expence of more extenſive happineſs. In like manner concern for the welfare of our kindred lays a juſt claim to our anxious care and attention, until it interfere with the welfare of our country. Then muſt reaſon aſcend it's throne, and direct the partial duty to give place to the general.

At this point it is, that the conduct of a man is intitled to the diſtinguiſhing appellation of Patriotiſm. Though the intereſt of a ſtate be materially promoted by the careful attention of each of it's members to his own private affairs and the proſperity of his family; yet in as much as private and not public welfare was the immediate object of their concern, the only proper title, that can be given them, is ſuch, as deſcribes, not the extenſive influence of their actions, but the confined nature of their views: and the greateſt praiſe, that can be beſtowed upon them, is that of being honeſt, careful, and induſtrious men. He only has a juſt claim to the diſtinguiſhing title of a Patriot, the chief object of whoſe attention and the leading principle of whoſe conduct are the good of his country, independent of the advantages, that may ariſe to himſelf, his family, or any particular perſon, to whom he may be attached. Nay; genuine Patriotiſm, as being the more general

general duty, will ſacrifice, however ſevere the trial may be, private advantage to public good, whenever they ſhall appear incompatible.

Such junctures of public calamity ſome times ariſe, as render it an indiſpenſable duty in every individual member of the ſtate for awhile to ſuſpend the care of his private affairs, to forget father and mother, wife and children, to ſteel his ſoul againſt every ſofter paſſion of the mind, and to "jeopard "his life unto the death in the high places of the field" in oppoſing the enemies of his country. It would ill become a Miniſter of the Goſpel to excite unneceſſary terrors in the minds of the people by exaggerating the dangers of our ſituation, or to create unneceſſary confuſion by endeavouring to withdraw the attention of men from the moſt important concerns of private life. Our ſituation, bad as it is, is not yet ſo very alarming. The exigences of the ſtate at preſent do not demand, would not juſtify, ſo deſperate a remedy. How near we may be to this ſtate of extreme neceſſity, or how ſoon it may come upon us, I will not pretend to ſay. This, at leaſt, is certain, that the moſt effectual method to ſecure ourſelves from it, is to exert ourſelves vigorouſly at preſent.

If we be indeed a brave, a generous, and a wiſe people, as we have always profeſſed ourſelves to be; there was never perhaps a more favourable opportunity for proving the truth of our pretenſions. Now is the time for the brave man to diſplay his valour in oppoſing danger, and not to wait tamely, until it follow him into ſcenes of luxury and diſſipation, or ſurpriſe him on the downy couch of ſloth. Now too let the generous

generous man know, that the firſt object of his generoſity ſhould be the diſtreſs of his country. And now alſo ſhould the wiſe man conſider, that it is the part of true wiſdom rather to guard againſt misfortunes, than to remedy them; to put forth a part of it's ſtrength to prevent thoſe calamities, which, when they have happened, cannot perhaps be redreſſed even by ſtraining every nerve.

It may be urged, that the exertions already made by others are ſufficient to protect us againſt the dangers, which at preſent threaten us. It is poſſible, they may. But who is ſo wiſe as to foreſee the various events of war, and the conſequences of ſuch vaſt preparations, as are made by our enemies? Beſides; let it be remembered, that the divine vengeance was not denounced againſt the inhabitants of Meroz, becauſe the exertions of others were conſidered as inſufficient to repel the impending danger. The conteſt was then over; and the heroic Tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were returned victorious from the ſlaughter of their enemies. It did not excuſe them for neglecting their duty, that their brethren had been active and ſucceſsful in the performance of their's. They, as well as Zebulun and Naphtali, owed aſſiſtance to their diſtreſſed country; and they were criminal in not contributing their ſhare, but laying the whole burden of it upon the more generous virtue of others.

With reſpect to the kind or degree of aſſiſtance, that any individual of theſe kingdoms may owe to his country in it's preſent diſtreſſes, it muſt be left to himſelf and his own conſcience. He beſt knows his own affairs and his own connections.

tions. He is the propereſt perſon to determine, whether he be able to aſſiſt his country with his perſonal ſervice or pecuniary contributions: whether his age, his ſtrength, or the ſituation of his affairs will permit him to oppoſe the enemies of his country on the embattled plain: or whether his circumſtances will allow him to contribute a part of his ſubſtance, to engage others to encounter the dangers, which he cannot. All that I would be underſtood to recommend, is this, That, as our country is engaged in an expenſive war, big with danger to the deareſt intereſts of theſe kingdoms, to our foreign poſſeſſions, to our trade, and of courſe to our manufactures, and perhaps to our very exiſtence as a free people; we would ſeriouſly and candidly conſider our ſituation and circumſtances, and impartially determine, what aſſiſtance we can and ought to afford to our diſtreſſed country. But above all things let us beware, that neither ſloth nor luxury nor avarice either bias our judgment in forming our deciſion, or diſſuade us afterwards from putting it in practice.

It will perhaps be urged by many of large property and extenſive poſſeſſions, that they are ſtrangers to a ſuperfluity of wealth: that their income, large as it may be ſuppoſed, is ſcarcely ſufficient to defray their own expences: and that, therefore, they can ſpare nothing, or next to nothing, to the diſtreſſes of the nation. The truth of this aſſertion is in general too evident to be directly denied. National glory, power, and wealth have been productive of general depravity, weakneſs, and poverty. Our glory made us vain, our power inſolent, and our wealth luxurious. Vanity and inſolence muſt produce weakneſs; and luxury is conſtantly attended by vice,

vice, and followed by poverty. If, therefore, we be ſenſible of our poverty, if we be affected by our diſgrace, if we ſincerely wiſh to be able to contribute ſomething to the relief of our diſtreſſed country, and to render it a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; let us reſolve to forſake thoſe practices, which have reduced us to our preſent ſituation; let us be more attentive to the buſineſs of our ſtations, than to gayety and amuſement; let us renounce a vain parade, and return to ſimplicity of manners, and ſtudy every virtue, particularly temperance and œconomy, above all things. For it is by doing thoſe things, which we ought not to have done, that we have been hitherto obliged to leave undone thoſe things, which we ought to have done: by indulging ourſelves in luxury, extravagance, and other vices, we have been diſabled from exerting ourſelves in the ſervice of our country.

It is the natural effect of temperance, œconomy, and other virtues to increaſe our reſources, and to give vigour to all our operations. But this is not the only nor the greateſt advantage attending them. The moſt unbounded reſources and the greateſt vigour are not able to enſure ſucceſs. There is one, that ruleth over all, who can confound the deep deſigns of the wiſe, and make the hearts of the valiant tremble: "He "killeth, and he maketh alive; he woundeth, and he healeth; "neither is there any, that can deliver out of his hand." *Deut.* xxxii. 39. His anger is more to be feared than any enemy, and his favour is the ſureſt ſafeguard. Yet the way to appeaſe his anger, and obtain his favour is plain and open to all. Sincere penitence and contrition will be able to diſarm his vengeance, and avert the terrors of his thunder

though red with uncommon wrath: and a conſcientious practice of virtue will be effectual in procuring his favour and protection. In this point public good and private intereſt are inſeparably united. By repentance and amendment of life, by practiſing every virtue and renouncing every vice, we ſhall receive ample benefit ourſelves, while we conciliate the favour of the Almighty to our country. This is a contribution, that may be made by all orders and ranks of men, by the warrior and the ſtateſman, by the prince and the peaſant, by the vigorous in the pride of his ſtrength, and by the feeble on the bed of ſickneſs. Hear, and attend to, the gracious declaration of God himſelf on this important ſubject: "At "what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation and concern-"ing a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to de-"ſtroy it; if that nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, "turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought "to do unto them." *Jer.* xviii. 7, 8. But, while we are comforted by ſo merciful an aſſurance, let us be warned, and excited to our duty by the dreadful threatening, which immediately follows it: "At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak con-"cerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and "to plant it; if it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my "voice; then I will repent of the good, wherewith I ſaid, I "would benefit them." ℣ 9, 10.

To ſum up the whole then: we may, I think, fairly conclude, that it is not only conſiſtent with the Spirit of Chriſtianity, but alſo the duty of every good man, to aſſiſt his diſtreſſed country, as far as he is able, and by every method his ſituation and circumſtances will admit of; whether it be by

by perſonal ſervice, pecuniary contributions, a faithful diſcharge of every office, and a hearty concurrence with every meaſure that tends to promote the ſtrength of the kingdom; or laſtly, what is in every body's power, by renouncing, as far as it is poſſible for frail humanity to renounce, every vice, and by conſcientiouſly practiſing every virtue; which are the only methods of procuring the favour of the Lord of Hoſts, the diſpoſer of victory, and by that mean rendering effectual the vigorous exertions of ourſelves or others. If the inhabitants of theſe kingdoms would reſolve to regulate their conduct by ſuch principles, we might addreſs our country without preſumption in the words of the inſpired Pſalmiſt: "Gird "thee with thy ſword upon thy thigh, O thou moſt mighty, "according to thy *ancient* renown. Good luck have thou "with thine honour: ride on becauſe of the word of truth, "of meekneſs, and righteouſneſs; and thy right hand ſhall "teach thee terrible things. Thy arrows are very ſharp; "and the people ſhall be ſubdued unto thee even in the "midſt among the king's enemies." *Pſal.* xlv. 4, 5, 6.

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